

**Tips and Resources for Sharing Nature With Children in the Classroom**  
**By Ann Regn, Virginia Office of Environmental Education**  
**Rediscover Virginia Natural History Weekend**

***Curiosity is the starting point of learning.***

- ✓ What are they interested in learning about or doing?
- ✓ If you build a leaf sailboat, where will it end up downstream?
- ✓ Follow tracks, look for the length of stride, the direction and hypothesize where home is. Bring some plaster to make a casting.
- ✓ Follow a sound until you locate the source; what was it? (cricket, frog)

***Teach children a skill.***

- ✓ How to identify animals or plants using books and field markings.
- ✓ How to use a field guide, binoculars, hand lens, net or other naturalist tools.
- ✓ How to make and keep a field journal.
- ✓ Build a shelter or craft item using natural objects or old time tools or methods.
- ✓ Help them use their senses and powers of observation.

***Imagination sparks magic and discovery.***

- ✓ Play animal charades before or after an outing.
- ✓ Have a Paul Bunyan contest to locate the largest tree in your area. Bring a tape measure or use human hands around the trunk.
- ✓ Bring a sea creature or woodland fairy to life – take pails and containers to collect evidence.
- ✓ Perform a puppet show before hike and let them create one afterwards.
- ✓ Invent your own animal “survivor” game to teach about habitats.
- ✓ Investigate an area- what animals live there? Why? Who eats whom.?

***Games help you explore.***

- ✓ Play a game of tag—predators chasing prey to bring food webs alive.
- ✓ Hide a dozen small pebbles and give a time limit to find them. Talk about camouflage in nature.
- ✓ Set up a treasure hunt, include hints about the setting or site you are using “the next clue will be at the base of the tallest tree...”
- ✓ Blindfold each person and lead them on a “nose” hike.

***Sharing affirms discovery and reinforces learning.***

- ✓ Start a journal or scrapbook of sketches, artwork, stories.
- ✓ Create a photo journal by dating and writing captions for the pictures.
- ✓ Create a map of your area or outing. Describe what you did and saw along the way.
- ✓ Gather everyone together and pass a “talking stone” around the circle. Each person shares a memory of the day.

**Resources:**

1. [www.vanaturally.com](http://www.vanaturally.com)- especially Project WET, WILD, PLT.
2. Sharing Nature with Children, Joseph Cornell.
3. Acclimatizing and Sunship Earth books by Steve Van Matre
4. Acorn Naturalists catalog, [www.acornnaturalists.com](http://www.acornnaturalists.com) in both printed and electronic form.

